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CHAPTER XVI
FREE PROFESSIONS

463 IT is not surprising that a rich and complex culture like Nupe should possess its clearly defined *artes liberales*—its professional scholars, scientists, and artists, or, in a terminology more akin to the native conception, its Mallams, barber-doctors, and drummers and dancers. I will leave the discussion of the profession of Mohammedan scholars for the chapter on education, and deal here with the last two of these 'free professions'.

BARBER-DOCTORS

'Free professions' in the sense in which we are using the term here does not necessarily mean 'individualistic' professions or professions unattached to any organization or co-operative unit. If what I have said in the preceding chapter about the meaning of guild-organization is correct, we may expect to find it developed also in the field of these native *artes liberales*. In fact, we do find it, adjusted to the new field of activity, in the barber-doctors of Nupe. We can no longer speak here of home industry; nor is the element of co-operation and mutual assistance the same as in the industries. But the other factors that tend to call into being a closely co-operative organization are clearly visible: we find again the necessity of long, specialized training, even to the degree of adoption into a trade secret; we also find the existence of a constant 'market' for the products and services of the craft; and lastly, we find a close relation between the group of craftsmen and the political system of the country.

305 As in medieval Europe and the Orient, the barber of Nupe, *gozan*, is 757 also doctor and surgeon. His activities are numerous: he cuts the hair of men, women, and children; he shaves the head and cuts the tribal marks of newborn babies at the name-giving ceremony. For a tenth of a penny he cuts finger- and toe-nails: a few barbers have specialized in tattooing. The barbers also dispense medicines (mostly worthless[1] infusions and charred powders made of herbs) for every known disease; they perform certain minor surgical operations—circumcision or blood-letting—and administer the *turare*, a potent inhalation of the smoke from certain medicinal herbs. Certain barbers know the secret of contraceptive medicines, others know cures against barrenness; others, again, are experts in the treatment of lunacy. This far-reaching competency is the most characteristic feature of the craft of Nupe barber-doctors. Leaving aside the ordinary routine work of the barber and certain simpler operations such as the cutting of tribal marks, we may say that every barber

[1] This judgement is based on an analysis in the Wellcome Research Laboratory in London, for which I am greatly indebted to this institution, of certain drugs made by the Nupe barber-doctors which I had brought home from Nigeria. The discussion of the more specifically medical questions I must leave for a future publication.

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has his own speciality, his own expert knowledge, his cures, and his special field. No wonder, then, that the Bida barbers are not of equal standing: there are famous 'celebrities', and there are also the smaller fry. The public is aware of these distinctions. It is well aware also of the special field of certain foreign barber-doctors who frequently come to Bida to practise. Thus, for example, it is generally known that the operation of removing the uvula of children—an operation said to help growth and secure better nourishment—is performed only by Hausa barbers. The more surprising, then, is the fact that this array of specialists and special cures is not equally accessible to every citizen of Bida or Nupe. For the barbers are organized in three independent guilds, one in each *ekpā* of the town. Neither doctors nor patients ever ignore these boundaries. Each guild, or guild section, is under its own titled head, who as a rule has also a 'second-in-command' (who is 'heir designate' to the guild-headship at the same time) to assist him in guild work. In the *Etsu* Umaru quarter guild-head and 'second-in-command' are called *Ndeji* and *Ndabaki*; in the *Etsu* Usman quarter *Tsadzo* and *Ndamaraki*; in the *Etsu* Masaba quarter we find only one guild rank, who is the present head of the guild at large, the *Sokyara*. This highest guild office is taken in rotation by the three guild sections.

The Bida barbers, busy and prosperous, do not practise farming in addition to their main occupation; nor do sons of barbers ever follow any other profession. On the contrary, men of other professions may become barbers. I have recorded three recent cases: two were adults, one a farmer and the other a (Fulani) herdsman; the third was a young man, the son of a straw-hat maker; the two adults settled later as barbers in villages; the young man, who came from Bida, remained there to practise his craft. To learn the barbers' craft proper does not take long: the apprentice works only a year under a master (without changing his habitation). The master, during this time, pockets the larger part of the apprentice's earnings. The apprentice himself buys the instruments of his new trade—a collection of old-fashioned razors, costing about 4*s.* to 5*s.* But to learn the medical side of the craft requires (I was told) a five-years' apprenticeship. One of the two men just mentioned had done this, and is to-day a practising 'doctor'. Let me add that neither the 'trade secrets' of the barber-doctors nor the training in the craft involve any magical or religious conception and form of procedure. It is purely a craft technique.[1]

The special cures and forms of treatment are secrets of individual barber families. They are handed on from generation to generation and are the common property of all adults in a family (though not of the

[1] Nupe society also possesses a certain group of 'doctors', or, more precisely, 'medicine-men'—*cigbeciźi* (*cigbe* means 'medicine')—whose craft is based on magical ideas and is closely linked with divining and the religious system of the country. I cannot describe here their organization more fully. I will only say that they practise mostly in the pagan districts, and that they are united in a loose 'order', acknowledging a common head, the *Etsu Cigbeciźi* in Bida. To-day the modern conception of the barber-doctor is gaining ground also in the pagan villages. I found a significant effect of this transition in two Nupe villages—'medicine-men' and diviners who were practising barbers at the same time.

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larger group, the guild section or guild). The work of the barbers is organized on the familiar lines of *efakó* and *bucá*. Although their work does not entail actually working together, a certain kind of work is regarded as a concern of the family group as such and as falling under the rules of *efakó*. The *efakó* principle itself is interpreted in an unusual sense. In the work of the barbers orders or summons do not usually reach the individual barber directly, but come to him via the head of the household, who allots the various tasks to the different family members. The proceeds from all work carried out on these lines are divided among the whole *efakó* group, in accordance with a certain schedule which takes into account the seniority of the different family members. The tasks which come under *efakó* rule are the most highly paid jobs: the shaving of the hair and the cutting of tribal marks at the name-giving ceremony, and the circumcision of boys. The first task is performed at the occasion of an important household feast, and the barber-doctors rarely fail to benefit from the generosity that goes with festal mood. These simpler operations are executed by the younger men of the family, but the family head and the older men will also be present, as guests quite as much as in their professional capacity—which latter may reveal itself in no more than an occasional hint thrown out to the young colleague. The barbers will all sit together, and in front of them there will be a bowl into which every visitor is expected to drop a coin, the largest contribution coming from the parents of the newborn child. Let us follow the fate of a shilling dropped into this bowl of the barbers at a name-giving ceremony in a Bida house: 2*d.* is retained by the grandmother, who held the infant during the operation; 1*d.* goes to each of the five junior members of the *efakó* group (including the young man who performed the operation); 1½*d.* each to two older men of the family, the family head and his younger brother; and 2*d.*, finally, to the head of the guild section.

All other work of the barbers is regarded as *bucá*: ordinary haircutting and shaving as well as medical treatment.[1] The latter, more lucrative, work is a prerogative of the older men, who alone know herbs and drugs and can perform the *turare*. The younger men will be taught these craft secrets when they reach a certain age. And thus another principle of family work is realized in the organization of the Nupe barber-doctors, namely, the balance in favour of senior family members which we have observed in the organization of farm-labour and native industries.

We have seen that in the distribution of *efakó* income a certain contribution goes to the head of the guild section. This, then, is a first instance of economic co-operation of the large professional unit. This co-operation is visible also in another, external, feature of this professional organization. In each of the three day-markets of Bida there is a special barbers' 'hall', a spacious open hut, where all the barbers (specially the family heads) meet in the afternoon, and sit and wait for clients and summons. This hut is built and kept up from a common fund. The existence of this common fund is itself evidence of a close co-operation in the financial field. Into this fund, which is called *dashí*, every barber

[1] The barbers are usually paid in money; but when the Bida barbers tour the country villages they often take firewood or food in lieu of payment.

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pays a small amount of money at regular intervals; the fund is administered by the guild-head; he deducts from it money for possible common expenses, and pays out the rest in full to every member of the guild section in turn, after every pay-day. This financial arrangement is fairly common in Nupe, specially among traders and labourers, and we shall discuss it in more detail later. The barbers, however, are the only professional group which has embodied it in its professional organization and utilizes it as a system of mutual financial assistance vested in the craft-guild.

The guild organization is restricted to Bida town. In the villages, even in the larger places, ~~one or two~~ barbers are sufficient to meet the normal demand. Besides, the medicine-man of the pagan districts would constitute a serious competition to the Bida doctors. But so far as barbers and barber-doctors are wanted in the country, the organization in the capital supplies them, either permanently or temporarily. Certain Bida barbers, for example, have settled in villages; others tour the country regularly, stopping in this or that place for longer or shorter periods. Even in these tours of the country districts round Bida, the barbers keep to the territory of 'their' royal house, i.e. the royal house on whose land in Bida their home stands. Although it clearly cannot be said of the barber-doctors that they 'serve the state' in the same way as blacksmiths or leather-workers, this arrangement is a striking evidence of the fact that their association with the political structure of the country is as strongly marked, and that they, again, are in certain respects the 'king's craftsmen'.

DRUMMERS AND DANCERS

The drummers in Bida, true to the more 'advanced' urban conception of art, are individualists; in the village, where the art of drumming belongs not only to the recreational side of social life, but also forms part of the organization of ritual and ceremony as well as production (we remember the part drumming plays in the farming *egbe*), it is less an 'art' in the modern sense of the word than a 'craft', working for well-defined institutionalized demands, and charged with responsibilities of a graver order. Drumming in the village thus moves in the framework of a close organization on guild lines. In every larger Nupe village we find a special group of drummers and musicians who, though belonging to different families and houses, yet recognize the authority of a common head, the *Etsu Dzã*, the King of the Drummers. Certain other, subordinate titles, are distributed, in guild fashion, among the other members of the craft. The art of drumming remains in the family and is handed on from father to son. You may see small boys practising drumming on ~~little toy-like~~ instruments under the eye of the father. They will go with him wherever he is called to perform, watching him and, when they are sufficiently advanced, accompanying him on their own drums. Sometimes boys from other families desire to become drummers. Their father will then get in touch with the head of the drummers, and give him his son as apprentice. The young apprentice will visit the drummer's house every day for his lesson. In the beginning

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food and drink. Traditionally, it is the child's grandfather who announces his name, simply and without ceremonial. But today the ceremonial has been widely remodelled in Mohammedan fashion, the announcement now falling to a mallam among the invited guests. The child's grandfather merely whispers the name to the mallam, who will then offer up prayers, in the usual mixture of crude Arabic and Hausa, and invoke divine blessing upon the new-born. It would seem that this innovation preserves the specifically religious aspect of the ceremony while shifting it from the preamble, the ancestral sacrifice (which is omitted in the strictly Mohammedan version), to the public announcement. But since a great many families still observe both the pagan sacrifice and the prayer of mallams, the religious emphasis is doubled. And this, too, seems fully warranted. For the public ceremony, at least, in the lavish style to be presently described, with singing and dancing, is itself an innovation, originating in Bida and among the wealthier classes of the capital. This festivity might well obscure the religious connotation of the naming ceremony; so that the doubling of the religious emphasis preserves the balance and hence the aspect of solemnization.

In the next and last phase of the *suna* this aspect once more disappears, giving way to purely secular interests. The infant is now brought outside, leaving the mother's hut for the first time, to be exhibited to the assembled guests. It is carried by the paternal grandmother, who also holds it when, presently, barbers will cut its hair and scratch the tribal marks on its cheeks and forehead. Traditionally, a male child's head should be shaved completely, while in the case of a girl the hair on the top of the head is left standing; this, incidentally, is the only feature in the *suna* ceremonial which varies with the sex of the child. Today, however, it is the fashion, especially in Bida, to cut the hair of boys *à la* mallam, that is, to leave a tuft of hair in the middle of the head as pious mallams do. The hair which has been shaved off is treated with some care; it is collected in a bowl and later buried inside the house, though there is no notion of evil consequences if these precautions were neglected. The facial operation is sometimes postponed for several days if the infant is too weak to stand it at once. To the observer, indeed, its cruelty seems the outstanding feature: the babe cries and squeals, and blood is running all over its face and body. The crowd, however, hardly takes notice, eating, drinking and chatting as before. The barbers perform the operation in a businesslike manner and leave as soon as they have finished, had some food, and received their fee. In wealthy households several barbers will be called in, though one man is quite sufficient for the job, and the father will try to secure the services

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852 of a famous barber-doctor. In wealthy households, too, drummers
553 and professional musicians will be engaged to entertain the gather-
ing and a women's dance, executed by the younger female guests,
● [305] will conclude the festivities. Some of the food left over will be
sent to relatives and friends who were unable to come; the father
may also make gifts to the blind or the poor, or to the children of
the town, if the diviners so advise him.

852 In the pagan ceremonial and in the *suna* of the poor the sumptu-
553 ous feast is replaced by a modest meal of meat-and-gruel offered
619 to friends and relations, without the added attractions of music
and dancing. The shaving of the infant's head and the cutting of
the tribal marks is the same in either case. We note, then, that the
ceremony establishing the individual and kinship identity of the
new-born also demonstrates his social identity in a wider sense,
that is, the membership of tribe and sub-tribe into which the child
is born and whose physical marks he will bear for life.

852 A similar idea, though more ambiguously expressed, would seem
304 to underlie also male circumcision. This custom is universal
[619] throughout Nupe, so that having been circumcised must be con-
sidered a mark of tribal membership. Yet circumcision is never
quoted when one enumerates the things that 'make a Nupe'; in-
deed, one knows that other tribes do the same and that circum-
cision is also typical of Islam. The observance presents several
[834] other puzzling features. It is called *zũ 'ba*, 'cutting the penis',
which open reference to private parts is strikingly uncommon. Nor
is the performance of the operation any less realistic and business-
[305] like. It is once more in the hands of the barbers, especially hired
and paid sixpence or a shilling for their work, and is accompanied
by no ceremonial; the only rule affecting everyday family life is
that the women must be out of the house on this occasion. The
operation coincides neither with birth nor with puberty, that is,
with an obviously important event or phase of life. It is performed
at the age of eight to eleven and individually for every family,
whenever the father thinks fit. The operation is, incidentally, even
more repugnant to watch than the cutting of the tribal marks. The
boys are terribly afraid; they have to be held down by the barber
and his assistant, and severely feel the pain. Yet this shock
experience seems again to serve no purpose; it is certainly not
linked with any other experience that might be impressed upon
the victims after or in consequence of their ordeal: they are neither
segregated from the community nor made to feel that they have
now passed a vital crisis and acquired some relevant qualification.
Nor yet will the operation ever be referred to again. Through it,
the boys have been made like other men of the tribe—that is all;
but it is difficult to see why it should take place at this time of

by women mostly among the Bida upper classes.[24] Their work is not organized in a guild.

Beadworkers are known as *lantana* and their craft, a luxury industry, consists of the " refining " of crude beads bought from Hausa and Arab traders; it is carried out in the entrance-hut of the compound and is entirely individual. The majority of the workers are paid at piece-rates, one of them acting as contractor, and the chain of finished beads is traded by his wife. This industry is being extinguished by imports of European beads.[25]

Glass-makers (*masaga*) claim to have originated in Egypt. Members of the guild are Moslems. The head (*tura*) is elected by popular vote. They have the most strongly organized and conspicuously self-contained of the Nupe craft guilds and there is a regular system of apprenticeship. This craft is mainly concentrated in Bida town. Black glass (*bikini*) is made, but this is being largely replaced by coloured glass (*kwalaba*) obtained by melting down bottles which have been bought by women traders. The native glass is made in one workshop, while fabrication is completed in others. Glass-workers have their market in their own quarter. Their main products are brightly coloured beads and bangles. Unlike other craftsmen, glass-workers undertake no agricultural work. There is no *bucá* work, all work being *efakó* with small wages.[27]

Tailoring and embroidery are individual crafts and members of the same household may belong to different professions. Tailors, including machine tailors, sometimes visit surrounding villages on their market days to find work. Their main products are caps, plain and embroidered gowns, trousers, and saddle-cloths. Their embroidered gowns are famous all over Nigeria.

Straw-hat makers use a " shape " of clay or wood and the crown of the hat is sometimes partly covered with leather. This is considered a " lazy " occupation, but a few craftsmen who have been taught European designs are well-to-do.

Mat-makers of certain villages, e.g., Kutigi, are famous, and make oval or square, multi-coloured grass mats. The Basa-Nge of Igala Division make baskets and mats.

Leather-workers formerly supplied a large part of the military equipment of the Nupe army—saddlery, leather shields, sword sheaths, quivers for arrows, etc. They work mainly in Bida town.[28]

Barber-doctors cut hair for men, women, and children; shave the head and cut the tribal marks of new-born babies at the naming ceremony and cut toe and finger nails. Individuals specialize in tattooing, medicines for diseases, contraceptives, cures for barrenness, treatment of lunacy, inhalants (*turare*), and minor operations such as circumcision and blood-letting. Hausa barbers remove the uvula of children.

Bida barbers, who are busy and prosperous, do not farm and their sons always become barbers, but this is not a " closed " craft. The length of apprenticeship varies. The most highly paid jobs are regarded by the family group as *efakó*, other jobs as *bucá*. There is a three-fold guild organization in Bida, corresponding to the territories of the three royal houses. Contributions from all *efakó* income are paid to the guild-head, who administers the guild fund, deducting money for common expenses and paying the rest in full to each member of the guild in turn.

There are also " *medicine-men*," whose craft is based on magical ideas and closely connected with divining and the Nupe religious system.[29]

Drummers and dancers, organized in mainly hereditary guilds, but with a system of apprenticeship, are found in all villages. Drumming may be recreational, for ceremony and ritual or ancillary to agricultural production (e.g., farming *egbe*). In

[24] Ibid., pp. 278–82.
[25] Ibid., pp. 282–5.
[27] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 274–9; 1940b, pp. 85–6; Robertson, 1935.
[28] Nadel, 1942, pp. 286–90; Linc, 1947; Hopkins, 1934.
[29] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 298–301, and see below, pp. 46–7.